

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

The EWP program is designed to reduce threats to life and property in the wake of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and wildfires. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to communities recovering from these events. Practices include debris removal, channel stabilization, streambank protection, gully control, and establishing vegetation.

Requests for assistance were received from five sponsors following heavy rains in June 2003. Three projects were approved and are awaiting funding.

South Carolina Grassland Conservation Coalition (SCGCC)

The SCGCC mission is to promote improved grassland management, provide research and education, and offer assistance to producers. This has been an exciting and productive year for the Coalition. NRCS and SCGCC co-hosted a three day BEHAVE (Behavioral Education for Human, Animal, Vegetation and Ecosystem Management) workshop for livestock producers and natural resource managers. The workshop featured Utah State University’s Dr. Fred Provenza and drew fifty participants from the Carolinas, Virginia, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida.

Cost Share Programs

NRCS provides technical and cost share assistance to landowners through programs authorized under the Farm Bill, which assists landusers in conserving natural resources throughout South Carolina. The Farm Bill represents the single most significant commitment of financial resources toward conservation on private lands in the Nation’s history. South Carolina NRCS is committed to working with landowners throughout the state to enhance soil and water resources through Farm Bill programs.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Six hundred EQIP applications were submitted for ranking, totaling more than \$30 million. As a result, 500 contracts were developed to assist landowners in reducing soil erosion, improving water quality, and protecting wildlife habitats. These contracts obligated over 7 million federal dollars to help landowners install conservation measures on nearly 45,000 acres of private lands.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

In 2003, NRCS continued to implement WHIP contracts with landowners. Highlighted among these are *Partners for Trout*, a trout preservation project in the upstate of South Carolina, and a waterfowl project on the coast. The program improved wildlife habitat on over 10,000 acres of South Carolina’s private lands, with 60 contracts funded totaling \$450,000.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

Through FIP in 2003, NRCS received over 600 applications for assistance, totaling \$500,000. NRCS assisted landowners in developing 200 contracts, which obligated nearly \$320,000 of federal cost share assistance to help reforest over 6,500 acres.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

WRP has been very popular in South Carolina for the past seven years. As a result, WRP easement payments in 2003 were made on over 10,000 acres, with \$10.1 million of cost share assistance provided for landowners to restore or enhance wetland conditions. To date, more than 33,000 acres in South Carolina have been enrolled in WRP.



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

NRCS assisted more than 85 landowners in developing applications for enrollment in CRP, resulting in 55 conservation plans being approved, totaling 4,482 acres. NRCS also assisted landowners in developing contracts on these lands, with approximately \$216,000 of cost sharing provided to install conservation practices on CRP contracted acres. Annual rental payments reached \$6.2 million, largely due to CRP Continuous Sign Up 26, and the installation of environmentally sensitive practices such as conservation buffers.

Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP)

NRCS provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value. In 2003, South Carolina secured four FRPP easements totaling nearly 800 acres.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

New Program

GRP is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property. NRCS, Farm Service Agency and Forest Service are coordinating implementation of GRP. The program will conserve vulnerable grasslands from conversion to cropland or other uses and conserve valuable grasslands by helping maintain viable ranching operations. In 2003, NRCS in South Carolina funded over 200 acres through GRP in four counties.

2003 South Carolina Natural Resources Conservation Activities

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Helping people conserve,
maintain, and improve
SC's natural resources



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NRCS Mission

To provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment

NRCS Vision

Harmony between people and the land

I am pleased to report that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in South Carolina had a successful year of conservation efforts in 2003.

NRCS staff, working with state conservation agencies, local conservation districts, resource conservation and development councils, tribal governments, community groups, and the land users of the state made great strides in conserving, maintaining, and improving the state's natural resources.

Soil erosion was minimized, water quality improved, wildlife habitat enhanced, wetlands restored, and other critical conservation practices were carried out. It is gratifying to know that South Carolinians love the land and are willing to take steps to protect and improve it--for both the present and future generations.

We continued to implement the programs of the 2002 Farm Bill to provide technical, financial, and educational assistance to address single or multiple natural resource concerns identified at the local level. Farm Bill programs in 2003 helped South Carolina landowners plan and apply conservation to their land.

While much has been accomplished, much still remains to be done. NRCS looks forward to another exciting and challenging year in 2004. We are prepared for the challenge that lies ahead and determined to succeed in our efforts to protect South Carolina's beautiful natural resources.



Walter W. Taylor
State Conservationist

Small Farmer Enhances Grazing Lands with Innovative Design



Lancaster farmer Danny Flynn and NRCS district conservationist Ann Christie.

Looking out behind the home of Lancaster farmer Danny Flynn, rolling green pastures and healthy cattle dot the landscape. But gaze closer among the hills and you may spot a quick moving vehicle with Flynn at the wheel. At first sight, it appears to be a four-wheeler. But, Flynn prefers an old golf cart to maneuver quickly and easily around his acreage. With the recent rains, the golf cart has been a lifesaver, as the vehicle makes its way easily through waterlogged fields. Flynn owns and operates a beef cattle operation on the same site where his father and grandfather also farmed. He worked with the Lancaster Conservation Partnership to improve 66 acres of grazing lands for his 26 cows.

"This project is a perfect example of the benefits of partnership when it comes to locally-led conservation," explained NRCS District Conservationist Ann Christie. The conservation work (administered with a 319-grant) impacts the Catawba Watershed, and the practices will help control non-point source (NPS) pollution. Some of the practices installed include critical area plantings to control erosion, installation of cross-fencing to facilitate rotational grazing, as well as installation of four watering troughs. Most innovative is the design Flynn chose for his pasture. He cut the acreage into six sections, moving his cattle from plot to plot about every 30 days. Centrally located in the middle of the fields is a working area that allows Flynn to access all the fields. By moving his livestock to fresh paddocks periodically, Flynn provides time for pasture re-growth. His cross-fencing and innovative water delivery devices are important tools. Feed costs decline and animal health improves when animals harvest their own feed in a well-managed rotational grazing system.

Flynn has been pleased with the his conservation plan so far. "Getting this farm revitalized has been my dream, and I'm making progress with the help of the local conservation partnership."

NRCS employees, working in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)-Land, Water, and Conservation Division and the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts, serve all 46 counties in South Carolina through 39 USDA Service Centers.



Individuals and communities receive one-on-one technical assistance from a multi-disciplinary staff, which includes soil conservationists, engineers, soil scientists, biologists, agronomists, and others – working together to ensure that the landuser receives the latest science-based technology and up-to-date natural resource information available for conservation on private lands. In 2003, assistance was provided to over 15,000 agricultural producers who applied conservation on 150,000 farmland acres.

Program Summary

Watershed Programs

NRCS uses the PL 83-566 Watershed Program to provide both technical and financial assistance to communities to help them identify and solve natural resource problems on a watershed scale. The program can be used to address almost any natural resource problem. Projects are implemented for flood prevention, recreation, fish and wildlife, municipal and industrial water supply, erosion control, water quality enhancements, or combinations of these purposes. Assistance can be provided on watersheds up to 250,000 acres in size.

Sixty-one watershed projects have been implemented throughout South Carolina under this program. Five operational projects—one flood prevention and four land treatment—covering portions of six different counties were active in 2003.

Between 1954 and 1990, a total of 104 dams were built in the state under this program. Over half of these dams are more than 30 years old. The Small Watershed Rehabilitation Act (PL 106-472) provides federal assistance in rehabilitating watershed dams. Requests for assessments of the conditions of about half of these dams have been made by project sponsors. Assessments were initiated on five dams in 2003.

The South Carolina Hydrologic Unit Map, an important resource in watershed planning, was certified in 1999. The map is being revised by a team composed of NRCS, US Forest Service (USFS), US Geological Survey (USGS), and the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) to meet current NRCS certification requirements.

Soils Resources and Assistance

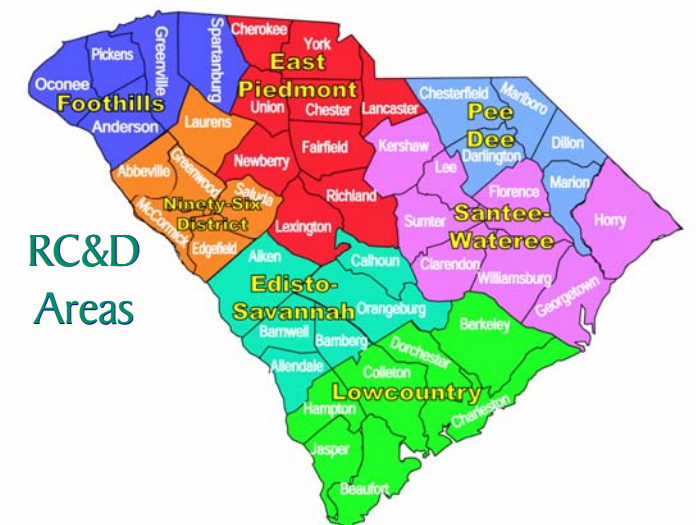
Maintaining a healthy soil base is extremely important to the overall conservation of South Carolina's natural resources. All soil surveys in South Carolina have been digitized and are available on-line at www.dnr.state.sc.us/water/nrima/gisdata. This site also has color infared information. Tabular data for all soil surveys in South Carolina is available at www.esri.sc.edu/sc_soils.

The Soil Science Society of South Carolina continued its mission to educate the public about the importance of the wise use of soil resources. The South Carolina Coalition for Soil Education, composed of educators and other natural resource professionals, developed and distributed over sixty hands-on soils kits for use in grades K-2.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

South Carolina has complete state RC&D coverage with seven areas—East Piedmont, Pee Dee, Ninety-Six District, Edisto-Savannah, Lowcountry, Santee-Wateree, and Foothills.

RC&D's are "making things happen" in the state's rural communities with over 50 community-based projects completed in 2003, in addition to the statewide *POWER for Wildlife* program. The program funded 78 new projects on nearly 550 acres. *Wheels to Work* (a program of the Edisto-Savannah RC&D) that makes automobiles available and affordable for people transitioning from welfare to work had a successful first year of operation. Twenty-two participants in the six-county demonstration area became financially independent from welfare assistance after receiving a vehicle.



Outreach and Special Projects

NRCS in South Carolina is implementing extensive outreach efforts to serve various minority, racial and ethnic groups.

NRCS continues to partner with South Carolina State University (an 1890 land grant institution) and in 2003 provided training to extension agents on conservation planning, average state costs, and Farm Bill programs.

An agreement was executed with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives to provide computer equipment and e-gov training to farmer co-ops throughout the state.

NRCS also worked with SC's Future Farmers of America (FFA) by participating in a legislative ceremony at the SC State House, attending the state convention, and judging FFA contests.

